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Applicant: SHAANAN, Gad Conf.:
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Filed: October 2, 2003 Examiner:
For: GOLF CLUB BAG

LETTER

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

December 9, 2003

Sir:

Under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. § 119 and 37 C.F.R. § 1.55(a), the applicant(s) hereby claim(s) the right of priority based on the following application(s):

<u>Country</u>	<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Filed</u>
CANADA	2,438,026	August 22, 2003

A certified copy of the above-noted application(s) is(are) attached hereto.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Specification and Drawings, as originally filed, with Application for Patent Serial No:
2,438,026, on August 22, 2003, by SHAANAN HOLDINGS, assignee of Gad Shaanan,
for "Golf Club Bag".

L. Lechance
Agent certificateur/Certifying Officer

October 21, 2003

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A golf bag includes a light-weight frame structure and a collapsible bag disposed within an inner space of the frame structure. The frame structure carries golf clubs in a directly exposed presentation, which protects the golf clubs from contacting one another and provides convenience for golf club selection. The collapsible bag is placed within the frame structure in a fully expanded condition and the contents therein are completely accessible through the open front the frame structure. The bag is completely removable from the frame structure, which provides a golfer with the option of leaving the bag with its contents while taking the light frame structure with the golf clubs carried therein, over a distance to the vicinity of a particular shot.

GOLF CLUB BAGFIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates in general to golf equipment, and in particular to golf club carriers.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Equipment for carrying golf clubs can be generally grouped into two categories. The prior art golf carriers in the first category usually comprise a hollow cylinder fabricated from canvass, leather or fabric, having a closed bottom and an open top. The golf clubs are disposed in an upright position within the cylinder, where they are randomly arrayed, making selection of a desired club somewhat difficult. In addition, such bags are usually quite heavy and cumbersome, thereby unduly tiring the golfer who chooses to carry his or her own clubs. Furthermore, the clubs contained in such a bag are not protected from colliding with one another, thereby creating noise and causing incidental damage to the chrome plated metal shafts, particularly during transportation.

[0003] The prior art golf club carriers in the second category usually include a rigid main body which can be either wheeled or not wheeled, and a plurality of holders and grip receivers so that the golf clubs are held in position individually and are thereby prevented from contacting the golf bag dividers, inserts, individual pockets, or one another. This is convenient for selection of the clubs from the carrier particularly when they are disposed in a directly exposed presentation, as for example disclosed by Johnson in United States patent 2,508,264, issued on May 16, 1950, and by Sheehan in United States

patent 5,730,285, issued on March 24, 1998. Nevertheless, it is difficult to access the storage compartments defined within the main bodies of these categories of prior art carriers, and it is not convenient to organize golf supplies and accessories contained in the storage compartments when the storage compartments have a relatively large capacity.

[0004] Another concern with prior art carriers is directed to relieving problems and inconveniences that may arise with an overly heavy and bulky golf bag, because in many instances the bags are not suitable for carrying on the golfer's shoulder due to their bulk and weight. For example, golf courses may have designated areas which are off limits to golf carts, and access to a position in close proximity to the greens is almost always restricted. It is in these situations the golfer must investigate the lie of his/her golf ball prior to choosing a club. In this situation a golfer will frequently find it necessary to carry a number of clubs from his/her bag to his/her ball, because the lie of the ball can markedly affect club selection. Carrying a number of loose clubs to one's ball, as every golfer knows, is awkward and may result in a lost club if clubs which are not used for the shot are overlooked when the golfer returns to his/her cart.

[0005] Therefore, efforts have been made to improve golf club carriers in various aspects thereof, which are presented in the above-mentioned United States patents and other prior art patents, for example United States patent 2,520,226, issued to Smith on August 29, 1950; United States patent 4,319,616, issued to Light on March 16, 1982; United States patent 5,417,334, issued to Wu on March 23, 1995; United States Patent 6,182,983,

issued to Kim on February 6, 2001; and United States Patent 6,499,593, issued to Uner et al. on December 31, 2002. However, there is still a need for further improvements of golf club carriers in order to overcome the shortcomings associated with currently existing golf club carriers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] One object of the present invention is to provide a golf club bag to better protect the golf clubs carried thereby.

[0007] Another object of the present invention is to provide a golf club bag which allows easy selection of the golf clubs carried thereby.

[0008] A further object of the present invention is to provide a golf club bag which allows for reducing the weight thereof, in order to be easily carried.

[0009] A still further object of the present invention is to provide a golf club bag which is convenient for use.

[0010] In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a golf club bag is provided for carrying a plurality of golf clubs in a directly exposed presentation. The golf club bag comprises a frame structure including a top end, a base end and a plurality of extension frames extending between the top and base ends, thereby defining an inner space within the frame structure, an open front and two open sides. Means for receiving grips of the clubs are attached to the base end at the respective open sides, and means for releasably securing hosels or shafts of the clubs are attached to the top end at the respective open sides. A bag is also provided to define a storage

enclosure therein. The bag is disposed within the frame structure, extending substantially from the top end to the base end. The bag is openable at the open front of the frame structure and is removable from the frame structure through the open front thereof.

[0011] The top end of the frame structure preferably comprises a section of a periphery thereof extending in a sloped direction with respect to the base end such that the hosel or shaft securing means and the grip receiving means positioned at one open side of the frame structure are spaced apart a greater distance than the spacing between the hosel or shaft securing means and the grip receiving means positioned at the other open side of the frame structure.

[0012] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a golf club bag is provided for carrying a plurality of golf clubs in a directly exposed presentation, and comprises a frame structure including a top end, a base end and a plurality of extension frames extending between the top and base ends, thereby defining an inner space within the frame structure, an open front, and two open sides thereof.

[0013] The top end comprises a top member including a pair of top side rims extending divergently towards the open front and being interconnected at the open front by an L-shaped front rim, thereby defining substantially a closed U-shaped periphery surrounding a top opening in a top plan view thereof. One of the top side rims extends downwardly towards the open front and the other of the top side rims extends upwardly towards the open front.

[0014] The base end comprises a base member shaped substantially similar to the periphery of the top member in a top plan view thereof.

[0015] A pair of lower side bodies are attached to the base end at the respective open sides of the frame structure. The lower side bodies are sized to cover the width of the respective open sides and to cover only a minor portion of the height of the respective open sides, each of the lower side bodies defining a plurality of openings in a top thereof in order to permit the golf club grips to be inserted into the lower side body.

[0016] The golf club bag further comprises means attached to the respective top side rims of the top end for releaseably securing hosels or shafts of the golf clubs.

[0017] In accordance with a further aspect of the present invention, a golf club bag is provided and comprises a rigid support structure for carrying a plurality of golf clubs thereon in a directly exposed presentation. The rigid support structure includes a top end and a base end defining an inner space therebetween. The golf club bag further includes a collapsible bag defining a storage enclosure therein. The collapsible bag is disposed within the inner space of the support structure, and extends substantially from the base end to the top end thereof. The bag is openable at a vertical side thereof and is removably held in the inner space of the support structure in a manner such that the collapsible bag maintains an extended condition even when containing no contents therein.

[0018] In accordance with still a further aspect of the present invention, a golf club bag is provided for carrying a plurality of golf clubs in a directly exposed

presentation, and comprises a frame structure including a top end, a base end and a plurality of extension frames extending between the top and base ends, thereby defining an inner space within the frame structure, an open front, and two open sides thereof. A means is attached to the base end at the respective open sides for receiving grips of the clubs. A plurality of holders are attached to a periphery of the top end for securing the hosels or shafts therein when the grips of the respective clubs are received in the receiving means attached to the base end. Each of the holders includes a pair of fingers having a closed position in which the fingers are positioned adjacent each other, thereby defining a circular opening therebetween for holding a golf club hosel or shaft, and an open position in which the fingers are positioned apart from each other to permit the hosel or shaft to move therebetween.

[0019] In one embodiment of the present invention the collapsible bag preferably comprises means attached to a top thereof for hanging the collapsible bag in a locker when the collapsible bag is removed from the support structure. In another embodiment of the present invention, a wheel assembly is preferably removeably attached to the frame structure to enable the golf club bag to be towed by a golfer.

[0020] The golf club bag of the present invention advantageously provides protection of golf clubs carried thereby, from colliding with one another, particularly because of the positive grip of each holder, thereby eliminating noise and avoiding incidental damage to the chrome plated metal shafts, and eliminating the need for covering the individual clubs. The golf club bag of the present invention also provides an exposed and accessible

presentation of the golf clubs held in position such that a golfer can easily make a club selection. The open type of frame structure advantageously reduces the overall weight of the golf club bag, and makes it easy and convenient to open the bag disposed within the frame structure. The bag which substantially fits within the inner space defined by the frame structure, provides a large volume of capacity and can be easily divided into compartments and attached with external pockets. These compartments and pockets are also easily and conveniently accessible due to the open configuration of the frame structure. Furthermore, the entire bag with the contents contained therein can be conveniently removed from the frame structure, for example to be stored in a locker of a change room. A golfer may also take the frame structure with golf clubs carried thereby to walk on the green to a particular spot while leaving the bag with its contents on a golf cart.

[0021] Other advantages and features of the present invention will be better understood with reference to preferred embodiments described hereinafter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0022] Having thus generally described the nature of the present invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, showing by way of illustration the preferred embodiments thereof, in which:

[0023] Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a golf club bag according to one embodiment of the present invention;

[0024] Fig. 2 is a top plan view of the golf club bag of Fig. 1;

[0025] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a top member configuration of a frame structure used in the embodiment of Fig. 1;

[0026] Fig. 4a is a perspective view of a holder assembly used with the frame structure for releasably securing hosels or shafts of the golf clubs, an upper half of the box of the assembly being removed in order to show the inner structure of the assembly;

[0027] Fig. 4b is bottom plan view of the holder assembly, illustrating both closed and open positions thereof;

[0028] Fig. 4c is a top plan view of Fig. 4a further illustrating the technical details of the assembly;

[0029] Fig. 4d is a side view of the holder assembly of Fig. 1, with both upper and lower halves of the box assembled;

[0030] Fig. 5 is a side elevational view of a trigger member used in the holder assembly of Fig. 4a;

[0031] Fig. 6a is a top plan view of a finger member used in the holder assembly of Fig. 4a;

[0032] Fig. 6b is a side view of the finger member of Fig. 6a;

[0033] Fig. 7 is an exploded perspective view of a collapsible bag used in the embodiment of Fig. 1;

[0034] Fig. 8 is a perspective view of an external pocket for attachment to the collapsible bag of Fig. 7;

[0035] Fig. 9 is a perspective view of another type of external pocket for attachment to the collapsible bag of Fig. 7; and

[0036] Fig. 10 is a perspective view of a golf club bag according to another embodiment of the present invention, which includes a detachable wheel assembly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0037] Referring to the drawings, particularly Figs. 1-3, a golf club bag according to one embodiment of the present invention and generally indicated by numeral 20, includes a frame structure 22 which has a top end 24, a base end 26, and a plurality of extension frames 28 extending between the top and base ends 24, 26. Thus the frame structure 22 defines an inner space therein and also defines an open front 30 and two open sides 32 (only one open side is shown in Fig. 1).

[0038] The top end 24 is formed with a top member as shown in Fig. 3 and includes a pair of top side rims 34 extending divergently towards the open front 30. One of the top side rims 34 extends downwardly and the other of the top side rims 34 extends upwardly, and both top side rims 34 are interconnected at the open front 30 by a L-shaped front rim 36, thereby defining a substantially closed U-shaped periphery surrounding a top opening 38, as more clearly shown in Fig. 2. The top member 24 is preferably made of molded plastic and further includes three downwardly extending legs 40 located at the respective front and back of the top member 24, as more clearly shown in Fig. 3, for connecting the respective extension frames 28 to the top member 24. The extension frames 28 are preferably made of an extruded aluminium hollow structure, and are connected

at their lower ends to the respective similar legs of a base member which forms the base end 26, and is shaped substantially similar to the periphery of the top member 24 in a top plan view thereof, as shown by broken line 26 in Fig. 2, thereby defining the frame structure 22.

[0039] Optionally, a number of reinforcing beams 42 can be added to the frame structure 22. In this embodiment of the present invention, four reinforcing beams 42, each being also preferably an extruded aluminium hollow structure, vertically extend between the top and base ends 24, 26.

[0040] A pair of lower side bodies 44 are provided and each is preferably a hollow structure of molded plastics. The lower side bodies 44 are attached to the base end 26 at the respective open sides 32 of the frame structure 22. The lower side bodies 44 are shaped to correspond with the side periphery of the base member 26, and are sized to cover the width of the respective open sides 32 and to cover only a minor portion of the height of the respective open sides 32, as more clearly shown in Fig. 1. A plurality of openings 46 are provided in a top 48 of the respective lower side bodies 44, in order to permit the grips of golf clubs to be inserted into the hollow lower side bodies 44.

[0041] The lower side bodies 44 can be separated from each other or integrated as a single unit. The lower side bodies 44 also include passages to allow the reinforcing beams 42 to extend therethrough as shown in Fig. 1]

[0042] Means are provided on the top side rims 34 for releasably securing hosels or shafts of the respective golf clubs when the grips of the clubs are inserted through the openings 46 and are received in the hollow lower side

- 11 -

bodies 44. The means provided on the top side rims 34 for releasably securing the hosels and shafts can be any type of suitable fastening and locking devices well known in the art, such as Velcro® nylon fastening strips, various types of holders, etc. In accordance with this embodiment of the present invention, a plurality of inwardly extending slots 50 are provided in the external side of the respective top side rims 34. A holder assembly 52 is installed in each of the slots 50 for releasably engaging the respective golf club hosels or shafts.

[0043] It should be noted that the distances between the individual slots 50 of the top end 24 and the bottom of the lower side bodies 44, are different because the front end of the divergent top side rims 34 are not positioned at the same level. In particular, the spacing between the top end 24 and the base end 26 increases gradually in a clockwise direction beginning at the lower end of one top side rim 34 which extends downwardly towards the open front 30. Thus, the golf clubs can be carried by the golf club bag 20 in a more organized presentation: the shorter ones at one side and the longer ones at the other side.

[0044] Referring now to Figs. 4a-6b, the holder assembly 52 includes a box having a top half 54 and a bottom half 56, for partially containing a pair of fingers 58. A number of pins 60 and 62 are provided for engagement in corresponding holes (not shown) of the holder assembly 52, for accurate positioning of the top and bottom halves 54, 56 of the holder assembly 52 during the assembly thereof. A pair of shafts 64 (only one shown) are interconnected at one end thereof by a joint member 66, in a spaced and parallel relationship. A sliding member 68 has a pair of holes which slidably receive the shafts 64, such that the

sliding member 68 is slidable along the shafts 64 in a longitudinal direction of the holder assembly 52. The box formed by the halves 54, 56, has a front opening (not indicated) to permit the fingers 58 to partially extend out thereof in a retracted and closed position, as shown by the solid line in Figs. 4b and 4d. The box further includes side openings 70 which permit the fingers 58 to pivot away from each other when the fingers 58 are pushed by coil springs (not shown) compressed between the joint member 66 and the sliding member 68, to further project forwardly to an extended and open position, as shown by the broken lines in Fig. 4b. The box formed by the halves 45, 56 further defines a recess 72 at the front end thereof so that a circular opening 74 defined between the fingers 58 in their closed position is exposed to allow for engagement with a hosel or shaft of a golf club.

[0045] The fingers 58 are identical, and each finger 58 includes a front section having a front surface extending inwardly and rearwardly. A semi-circular recess 78 is defined on the inner side of the front section to form the circular opening 74 when the two fingers 58 mate with each other in their closed position. Each finger 58 also includes a rear section having a straight side surface 38 extending to an outer side surface 80 extending rearwardly and outwardly, terminating at a stop member 82 which projects laterally from the rear end of the finger 58. A first group of teeth 84a, 84b and 84c are provided at the inner side of the rear section of finger 58, and are located only on the upper half of the finger 58. A second group of teeth 86a and 86b are provided on the lower half of finger 58, and are positioned alternately with respect to the first group of teeth 84a-84c. Three recesses 85a-85c (see Fig. 6b) positioned alternately with

respect to the teeth 86a and 86b, are defined in the lower half of the finger 58, corresponding to the positions of the teeth 84a-84c on the upper half of the same finger 58. Similarly, recesses 87a-87b are defined in the upper half of the finger 58. Thus, the first group of teeth 84a-84c of one of the fingers 58 engage the second group of teeth 86a and 86b of the other finger 58 and are received in the corresponding recesses 85a-85c of the other finger 58, when the two fingers 58 mate with each other in their open position. Each finger 58 includes a middle section having a sectoral recess 88, and a curved groove 90 which is further recessed from the planar surface of the recess 88. A guide pin 92 extends upwardly from the planar surface of the sectoral recess 88 and is located at the inner end of the curved groove 90. Thus, when fingers 58 mate with each other, the fingers 58 are overlapped at a region of their sectoral recess 88, with pin 92 of each finger 58 being slidably received in the curved groove 90 of the other finger 58, such that the mated fingers 58 are permitted to pivot about their geared teeth 84 and recesses 85a, between the open and closed positions.

[0046] The holder assembly 52 further includes a trigger member 94 having an upper section 96 functioning as a button which is moveable upwardly and downwardly through a opening (not shown) in the upper half 54 of the box, and a lower portion 98 having a substantial "U" shape disposed laterally. A pin 100 having a beveled top end extends upwardly from a bottom leg 101 of the substantially U-shaped lower portion 98.

[0047] In operation, the trigger member 94 is forced into a upper position as shown in Figs. 4a and 4d by a compression coil spring (not shown) disposed within the

- 14 -

lower half 56 of the box and abutting the bottom leg 101 of the lower section 98, such that the pin 100 engages the stop member 82 of one of the fingers 58. Because of the engagement of the stop member 82 of one of the fingers 58, the mated fingers 58 are held in their closed and retracted position against the spring force acting on the sliding member 68. When the trigger member 94 is pressed down to release the engagement of the pin 100 with the stop member 82 of the finger 58, the mated fingers 58 are forced by the spring force acting on the sliding member 68, to move forwardly from their closed and retracted position. During the forward movement of the mated fingers 58, the fingers 58 are guided by the respective pins 62 which contact the respective external side surfaces 83 and 80, and are also guided by an inclined inner side surface 102 of the lower half 56 of the box (more clearly shown in Fig. 4c), the inner side surface 102 being contacted by the respective stop members 82 of the respective fingers 58. Thus, the rear sections of the respective fingers 58 are forced to pivot about the geared pair of teeth 84a and recesses 85a thereof toward each other, resulting in a pivotal movement of the front sections of the respective fingers 58 away from each other. This pivotal movement is also guided by the respective pins 92 sliding in their corresponding curved grooves 90. Therefore, the mated fingers 58 project forwardly and open widely for receiving insertion of a hosel or shaft of a golf club therebetween.

[0048] Each of the holder assemblies 52 are attached to the top side rims 34 of the frame structure 22 of Fig. 1, and are preferably disposed in one of the slots 50, with the fingers 58 facing outwardly as shown in Fig. 2.

[0049] When the fingers 58 are in their extended and open position as shown by the broken lines of Fig. 4b, the holder assembly 52 is ready to receive a golf club to be secured therein. In use, the grip of a golf club is inserted into one of the openings 46 such that the golf club is disposed in a substantial upright position with the club head extending upwardly. The opening 46 loosely receives the grip and allows the club head to move laterally with respect to the corresponding top side rims 34. Therefore, the hosel or shaft of the golf club can be moved into the space between the fingers 58 in their extended and open position, and can further be pushed against the fingers 58 towards the rear end of the holder assembly 52. This causes the fingers 58 to retract rearwardly into the two halves 54, 56 of the box against the spring force acting on the sliding member 68, and gradually to be closed with the hosel or shaft of the golf secured therebetween. This retracting movement of the fingers 58 is a reverse course of the forward movement thereof which has been described in detail, and therefore is not repeated herein.

[0050] When the fingers 58 retract rearwardly into the halves 54, 56 of the box, the rear end of one of the fingers 58 abuts the beveled top end of the pin 100 of the trigger member 94, causing the trigger member 94 to be forcibly pressed downwardly against the compressed coil spring (not shown) which abuts the bottom surface of the lower leg 101 of the trigger member 94. After the stop member 82 has passed the pin 100 of the trigger member 94, the trigger member 94 moves upwardly under the spring force, thereby causing the pin 100 to engage the stop member 82 of the finger 58. Thus, the mated fingers 58 are

- 16 -

locked in their retracted and closed position with the hosel or shaft of the golf club being held therebetween.

[0051] Referring now to Figs. 1 and 7, a bag 104 defining a storage enclosure therein is disposed within the inner space of the frame structure 22 and extends substantially from the top end 24 to the base end 26. The bag 104 includes a main housing 106 which has an elongate annular side wall 108 made of soft material such as fabrics or soft nylon, and top and bottom ends 110, 112 which are each made of a piece of rigid plastics 114 sandwiched between pieces of fabric or soft nylon 116. Thus, the bag 104 is collapsible.

[0052] The main housing 106 of the bag 104 is divided by fabric or soft nylon dividers 118 and 120 into small, medium and large compartments 122, 124 and 126 disposed from the top to the bottom of the main housing 106. Two pieces of fabric or soft nylon 128 are stitched to the upholstered sides of the annular side walls 108 inside the large compartment 126 at about the mid-point thereof, and are provided with Velcro® fastening strips 130 to form an additional divider 132 when attached together thereby, such that the large compartment 126 can be selectively divided into two medium sized compartments.

[0053] The main housing 106 is cut at its front end to form openable covers 134, 136 and 138 in order to provide access to the respective compartments 122, 124 and 126. The covers 134, 136 and 138 are each provided with a zipper for closing the corresponding compartments, and are accessible from the open front of the frame structure 22 of Fig. 1 while the bag 104 is disposed within the inner space of the frame structure 22.

[0054] A collar member 140 is attached to the top end 110 of the main housing 106 for attaching the bag 104 to the frame structure 22 of Fig. 1 when the bag is placed within the frame structure 22. The collar member 140 extends along the side and rear peripheries of the top end 110 of the main housing 106, leaving the front end thereof open. The collar member 140 is preferably made of synthetic rubber such as neoprene, and is laminated with fabrics at both sides. The collar member 140 usually maintains an upright position but is also flexible for easy attachment to the top end 24 of the frame structure 22 of Fig. 1. The height of the collar member 140 decreases gradually from one end to the other end in order to correspond with the spacing change between the base end 26 and the divergent top side rims 34. Openings 142 are provided in the collar member 140 at the top of the respective ends thereof, for receiving fastening elements which may be used to secure the collar member 140 to the respective top side rims 34 of the frame structure 22. A middle portion 144 of the collar member 140, extends upwardly and rearwardly so as to engage a support member 146 affixed to the divergent top side rims 34 at their joining point, as is more clearly shown in Fig. 2. Optionally, a piece of Velcro® fastening strip 148 is attached to the outer surface of the middle portion 144 of the collar member 140, which is adapted to engage a corresponding piece of Velcro® fastening strip attached to the support member 146. The collar member 140 when attached to the top end 24 of the frame structure 22, ensures that the collapsible bag 104 maintains its expanded condition even when there are no contents therein.

[0055] An upper pocket 150 is attached to the rigid top end 110 of the main housing 106 for containing a retractable hook 152. The hook 152 is connected by a

section of strap 154 to the rigid top end 110 of the main housing 106, and is enabled to extend upwardly and outwardly through an openable upper cover 156 of the upper pocket 150, in order to allow the bag 104 to be hung within a locker of a change room, when it is desired. The upper pocket 150 is further divided by a piece of soft nylon divider 158, into a main upper compartment (not indicated) for containing the retractable hook 152 and the piece of strap 154 when they are retracted and stored therein, and a small front upper compartment 160 for containing, for example golf balls or other small accessories. The small front upper compartment 160 is cut at its front upper edge and is provided with a zipper 162 for selectively opening and closing the small front upper compartment 160. A zipper 164 is also provided to selectively open or close the cover 156 of the upper pocket 150.

[0056] A carrying handle 166 preferably made of neoprene laminated with fabric, is affixed to the front end of the main housing 106 between the covers 134 and 136. Two pair of strips 168 (only one pair shown in Fig. 7, but two pairs shown in Fig. 2) made of Velcro® are attached to the middle section of the main housing 106 at the respective rear sides, which can be used to secure the bag 104 to two of the reinforcing beams 42 when the bag 104 is placed within the inner space of the frame structure.

[0057] Further referring to Fig. 1 and Figs. 7-9, additional pockets 170, 172 are provided for conveniently containing golf balls or other small accessories. The additional pockets 170 and 172 are made of, for example fabric or soft nylon, and have openable covers 174, 176 which are equipped with zippers 178 and 180. The additional pockets 170 and 172 are sized appropriately for

- 19 -

attachment to the respective covers 138 and 136 of the main housing 106 of the bag 104, such that they are easily accessible from the open front end 30 of the frame structure 22. The pockets 170, 172 may further include an additional pouch made of fabric or soft nylon 182, as shown in Fig. 9, having an open upper side in order to contain, for example golf tees.

[0058] The compartments of the bag 104 and the additional pockets 170 and 172 can be designed in various styles and sizes, which does not change the principle of the present invention. The golf bag 20 according to the present invention, provides the convenience of selectively separating a relatively large, collapsible bag for containing garments and accessories, from a relatively light weight frame structure for carrying golf clubs. Thus at the golfer's discretion, the bag 104 with its contents can be easily removed from the frame structure 22 through the open front end 30 thereof, and can then be hung within a locker in a change room, or the bag 104 with its contents can be carried within the frame structure 22, in its fully extended condition. When the collapsible bag 104 maintains its fully extended condition either in a locker in the frame structure 22, there will be no difficulties opening the covers 134, 136 and 138 for access to the individual compartments. Collapsible containers are usually only accessible from their top opening, because they will partially collapse when not full. Top access to an elongated upstanding container is not convenient for retrieving contents therefrom. The fully expanded condition ensures that the collapsible bag of the present invention can be opened from the front for convenient access to the contents therein.

[0059] The feature of complete removability of the bag 104 from the frame structure 22 further advantageously provides the golfer with the convenience of being able to leave the bag with its contents at a golf cart and take only the golf clubs carried by the relatively light frame structure 22 over a distance to the vicinity of a particular shot.

[0060] Fig. 10 illustrates a further embodiment of the present invention in which a golf club bag 20a includes a frame structure 22a and a collapsible bag 104a disposed in a fully extended condition within an inner space defined by the frame structure 22a. The frame structure 22a and the collapsible bag 104a are similar to the frame structure 22 and the collapsible bag 104 described with reference to Figs. (1-9), and therefore will not be redundantly described.

[0061] The golf club bag 20a according to the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 10, further includes a wheel assembly 186 which is detachable from the frame structure 22a. The wheel assembly 186 generally includes a pair of wheels 188 rotatably supported on a pair of leg parts 190. The leg parts 190 are detachably mounted to the base end 26a of the frame structure 22a. There are various well known means available in the art for detachably mounting the wheel assembly 186 to the golf bag 20a, examples thereof are disclosed in United States Patent 6,068,270 and 6,182,983, issued on May 30, 2000 and February 6, 2001, both to Kim. Therefore, the wheel assembly 186 will not be further described in detail. The golf bag 20a with the detachable wheel assembly 186 further provides a golfer with the option of towing the golf bag 20a with or without the collapsible bag 104a placed in position. The golfer may also carry the golf bag 20a with

- 21 -

or without the collapsible bag 104a placed in position, using a shoulder strap (not shown).

[0062] Modifications and improvements to the above-described embodiments of the present invention may become apparent to those skilled in the art. For example, the frame structure can be replaced by a rigid support structure which can removably support the collapsible bag within an inner space thereof or is equipped with the holders. The rigid support structure could be a frame structure or a shell structure. The foregoing description is intended to be exemplary rather than limiting. The scope of the invention is therefore intended to be limited solely by the scope of the appended claims.

I/WE CLAIM:

1. A golf club bag for carrying a plurality of golf clubs in a directly exposed presentation, comprising:
a frame structure including a top end, a base end and a plurality of extension frames extending between the top and base ends, thereby defining an inner space within the frame structure, an open front, and two open sides;
means attached to the base end at the respective open sides for receiving grips of the clubs;
means provided at the top end at the respective open sides for releaseably securing hosels or shafts of the clubs; and
a bag defining a storage enclosure therein, the bag being disposed within the inner space of the frame structure and extending substantially from the top end to the base end of the frame structure, the bag being openable at the open front of the frame structure, and being removable from the frame structure through the open front thereof.
2. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 wherein the top end comprises a section of a periphery thereof extending in a sloped direction with respect to the base end such that the hosel or shaft securing means and the grip receiving means positioned at one open side of the frame structure are spaced apart a greater distance than the spacing between the hosel or shaft securing means and the grip receiving means

- 23 -

positioned at the other open side of the frame structure.

3. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 wherein the base is collapsible and is held within the inner space of the frame structure in a manner such that the collapsible bag maintains an extended condition, even when containing no contents therein.
4. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 wherein the top end comprises a top member including a pair of top side rims extending divergently towards the open front and interconnected at the open front by a front rim, thereby defining substantially a closed U-shaped periphery surrounding a top opening in a top plan view thereof.
5. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 4 wherein one of the top side rims extends downwardly towards the open front and the other of the top side rims extends upwardly towards the open front.
6. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 wherein the means for receiving golf club grips comprises a pair of lower side bodies attached to the base end at the respective open sides of the frame structure, the lower side bodies being sized to cover the width of the respective open sides and to cover only a minor portion of the height of the respective open sides, each of the lower side bodies defining a plurality of openings in a top thereof in order to permit the golf club grips to be inserted into the lower side body.

- 24 -

7. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 6 wherein each of the lower side bodies comprises a hollow configuration.
8. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 wherein the means for releaseably securing golf club hosels or shafts comprises a plurality of slots defined in a periphery of the top end and extending inwardly therefrom, for securing the hosels or shafts therein when the grips of the respective clubs are received in the lower side bodies and the corresponding hosels or shafts are pushed into the respective slots.
9. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 8 wherein the means for releaseably securing golf club hosels or shafts further comprises a plurality of holders installed in the respective slots for releaseably engaging the respective hosels or shafts.
10. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 9 wherein each of the holders comprises a pair of fingers having a closed position in which the fingers are positioned adjacent each other, thereby defining a circular opening therebetween for holding a golf club hosel or shaft, and an open position in which the fingers are positioned apart from each other to permit the hosel or shaft to move therebetween.
11. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 10 wherein each of the holders comprises a box for partially containing the fingers, the fingers in both the closed and open positions extending outwardly from the box through an opening at one end of the box, each holder including at least one spring to force

the fingers to project out of the box and to move from the closed position to the open position, the spring being biased when the fingers are pushed towards the box to move from the open position to the closed position.

12. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 11 wherein each of the holders comprises a trigger to lock the fingers in the closed position against a spring force, the trigger being adapted to be actuated to release the fingers such that the fingers are urged by the spring force to move to the open position.
13. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 wherein the bag comprises a plurality of divided compartments therein, each compartment being individually openable.
14. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 13 wherein the bag comprises a top pocket openable from a top opening at the top end of the frame structure.
15. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 13 wherein the bag comprises a plurality of external pockets attached thereto, the pockets being accessible from the open front.
16. A golf bag as claimed in claim 3 wherein the collapsible bag comprises means located at a top thereof for releasable attachment of the collapsible bag to a top member of the frame structure.

- 26 -

17. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 1 comprising a wheel assembly attached to the frame structure such that the golf club bag can be towed by a golfer.
18. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 17 wherein the wheel assembly is detachable from the frame structure.
19. A golf club bag for carrying a plurality of golf clubs in a directly exposed presentation, comprising:
a frame structure including a top end, a base end and a plurality of extension frames extending between the top and base ends, thereby defining an inner space within the frame structure, an open front, and two open sides, wherein
the top end comprises a top member including a pair of top side rims extending divergently towards the open front and being interconnected at the open front by an L-shaped front rim, thereby defining substantially a closed U-shaped periphery surrounding a top opening in a top plan view thereof, one of the top side rims extending downwardly towards the open front and the other of the top side rims extending upwardly towards the open front; and wherein
the base end comprises a base member shaped substantially similar to the periphery of the top member in a top plan view thereof;
a pair of lower side bodies attached to the base end at the respective open sides of the frame structure, the lower side bodies being sized to

- 27 -

cover the width of the respective open sides and to cover only a minor portion of the height of the respective open sides, each of the lower side bodies defining a plurality of openings in a top thereof in order to permit the golf club grips to be inserted into the lower side body;

means attached to the respective top side rims of the top end for releaseably securing hosels or shafts of the golf clubs.

20. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 19 wherein the means for releaseably securing the hosels or shafts of the respective golf clubs comprises a plurality of holders.

21. A golf club bag comprising:

a rigid support structure for carrying a plurality of golf clubs thereon in a directly exposed presentation, the rigid support structure including a top end and a base end defining a inner space therebetween;

a collapsible bag defining a storage enclosure therein, the bag being disposed within the inner space of the support structure, and extending substantially from the base end to the top end thereof, the collapsible bag being openable at a vertical side thereof and being removably held in the inner space of the support structure in a manner such that the collapsible bag maintains an extended condition even when containing no contents therein.

- 28 -

22. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 21 wherein the collapsible bag comprises means attached to a top thereof for hanging the collapsible bag in a locker when the collapsible bag is removed from the support structure.
23. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 21 wherein the rigid support structure comprises a frame structure having an open front end permitting access therethrough to the openable vertical side of the collapsible bag.
24. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 21 wherein the rigid support structure comprises a shell structure permitting access to the openable vertical side of the collapsible bag.
25. A golf club bag for carrying a plurality of golf clubs in a directly exposed presentation, comprising:
a frame structure including a top end, a base end and a plurality of extension frames extending between the top and base ends, thereby defining an inner space within the frame structure, an open front, and two open sides;
means attached to the base end at the respective open sides for receiving grips of the clubs; and
a plurality of holders attached to a periphery of the top end for securing the hosels or shafts therein when the grips of the respective clubs are received in the receiving means attached to the base end, each of the holders including a pair of fingers having a closed position in which the fingers are positioned adjacent each other,

- 29 -

thereby defining a circular opening therebetween for holding a golf club hosel or shaft, and an open position in which the fingers are positioned apart from each other to permit the hosel or shaft to move therebetween.

26. A golf club bag as claimed in claim 25 wherein the holders are installed in a plurality of slots respectively, the slots being defined in the periphery of the top end and extending inwardly therefrom.

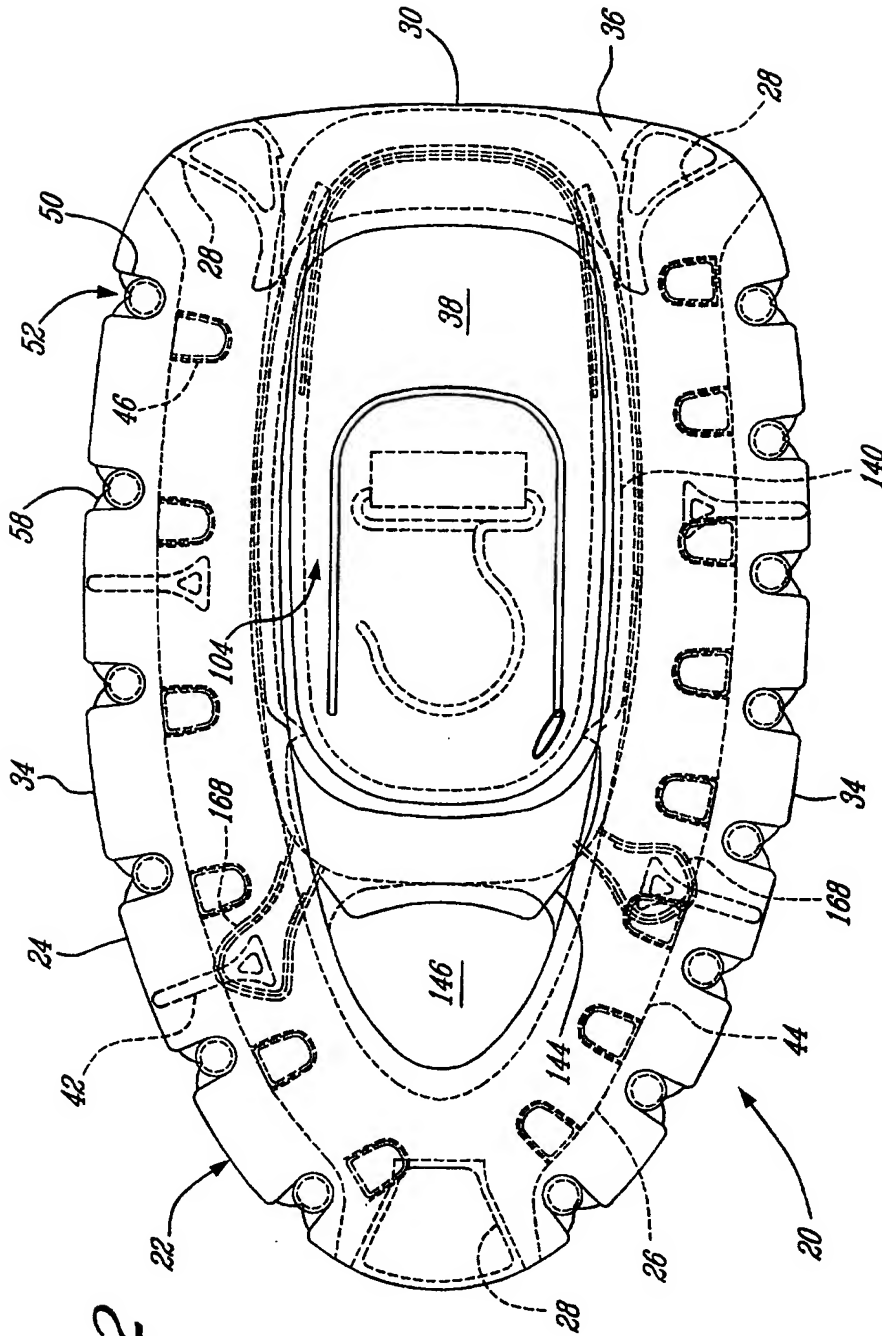


Fig. 2

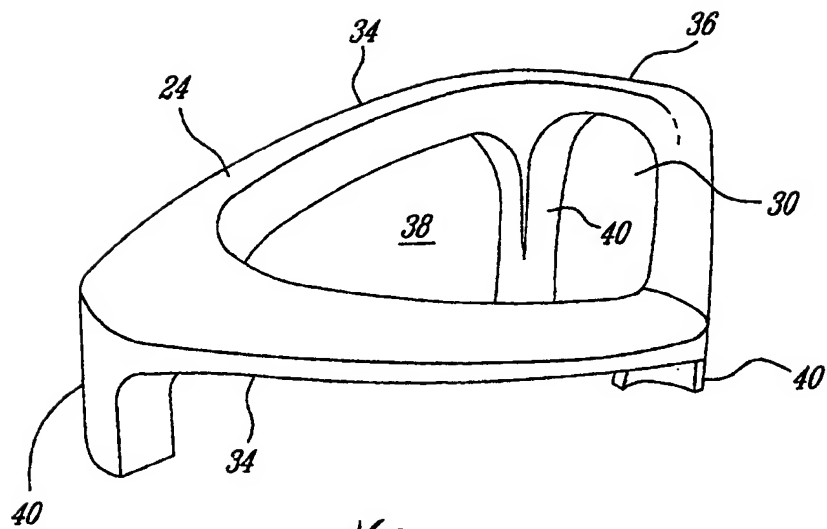
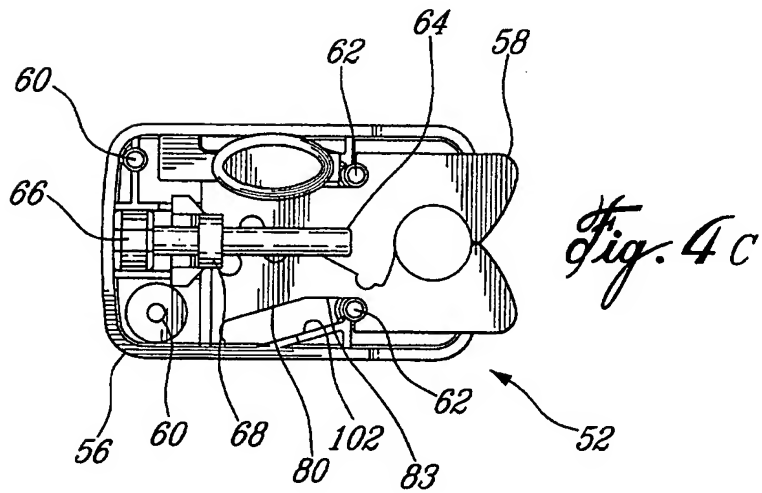
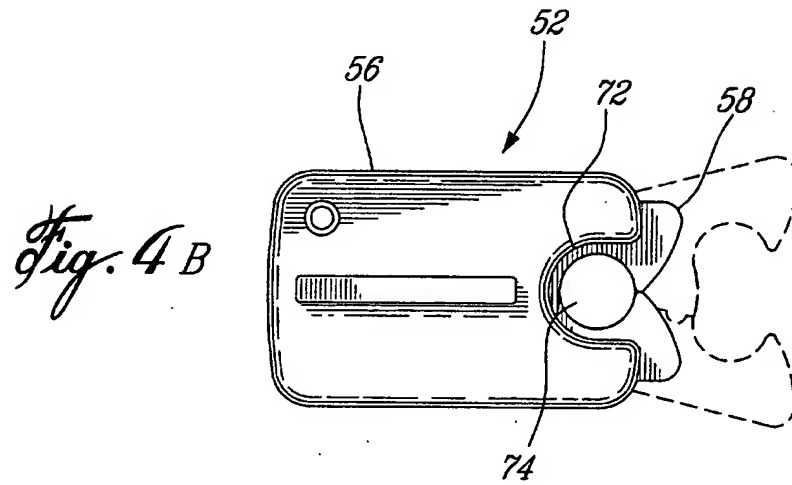
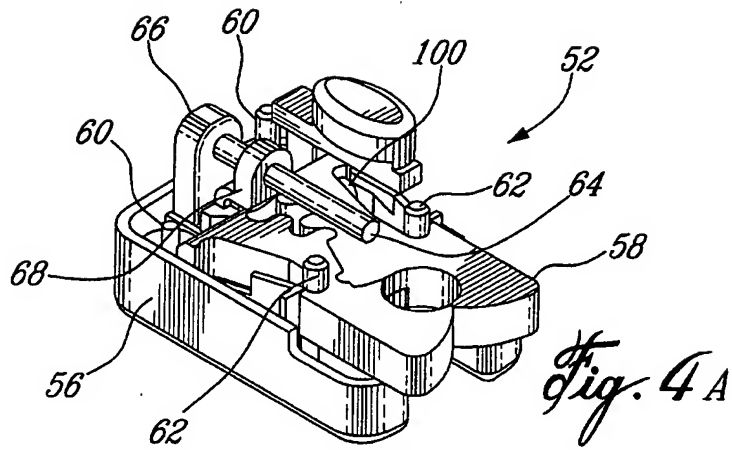


Fig. 3



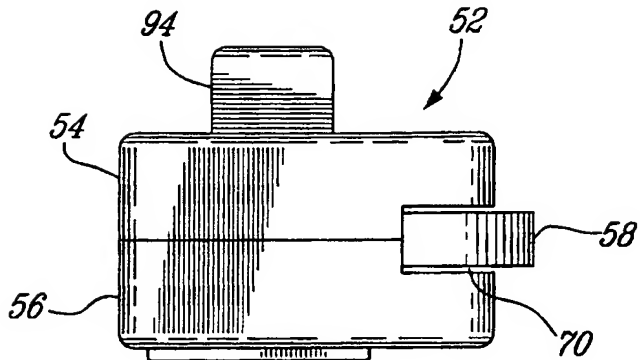


Fig. 4 D

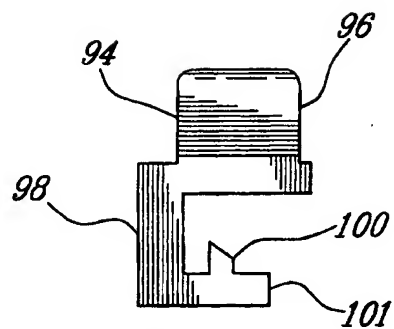


Fig. 5

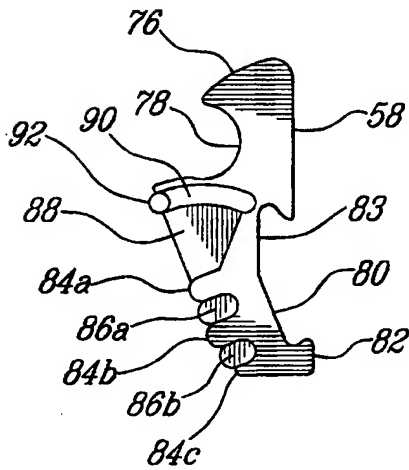


Fig. 6 A

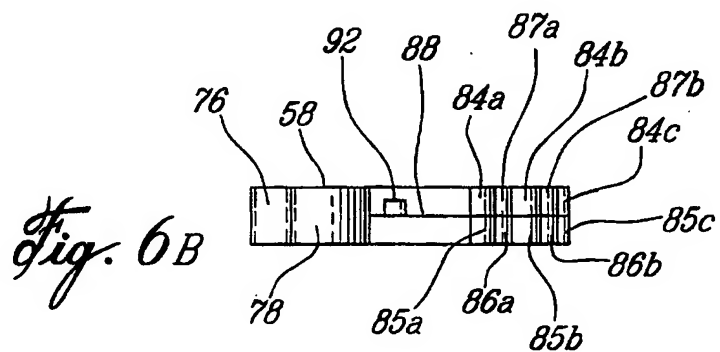


Fig. 6 B

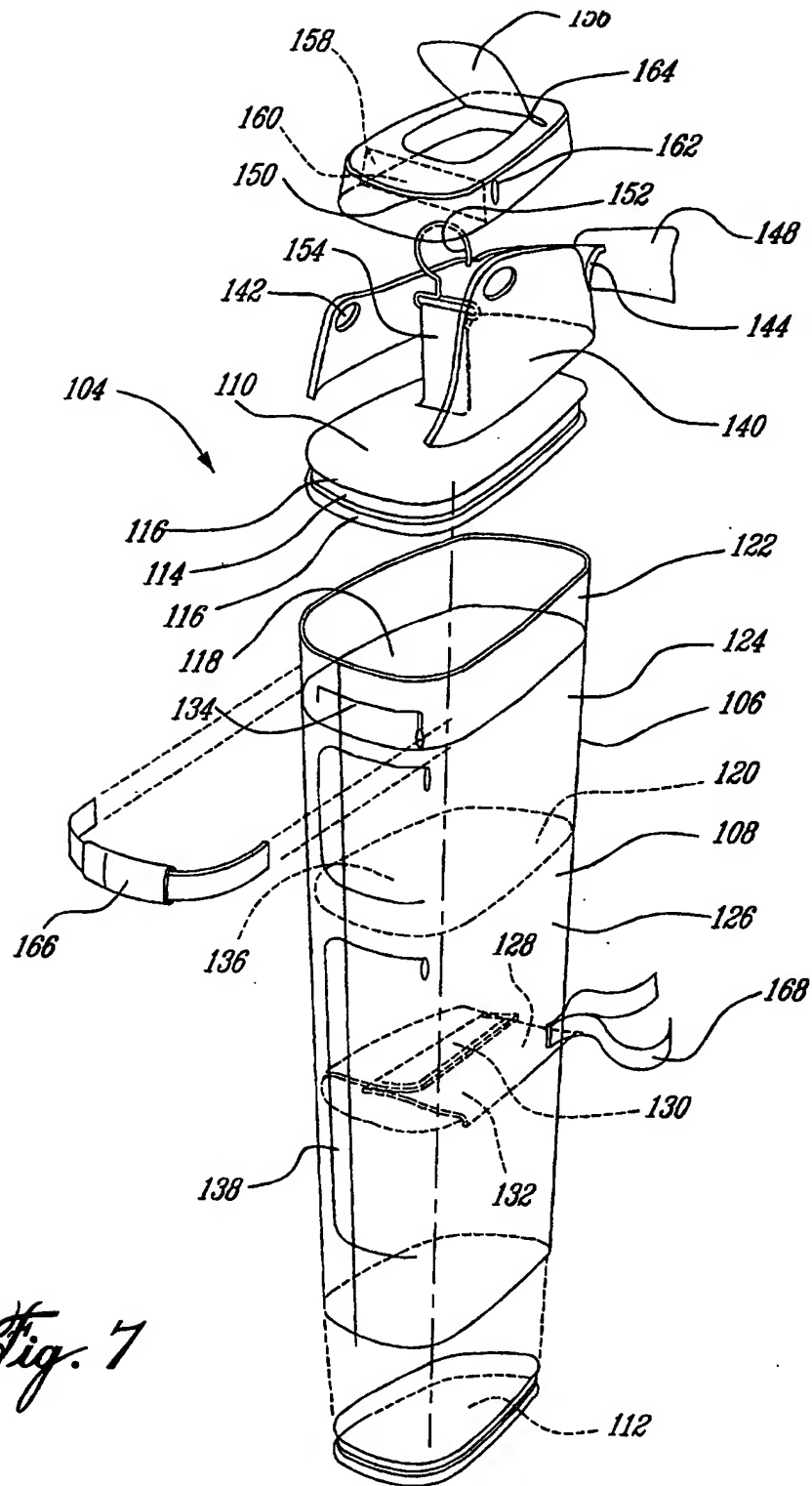
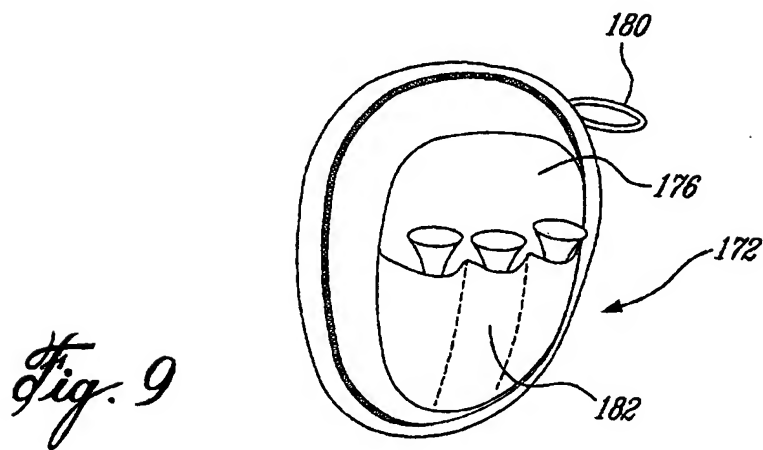
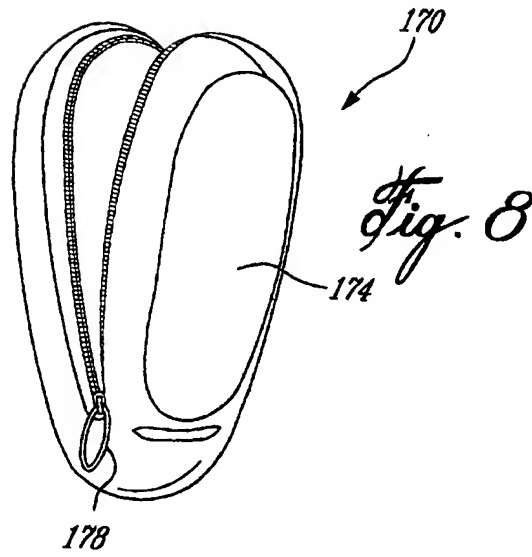


Fig. 7



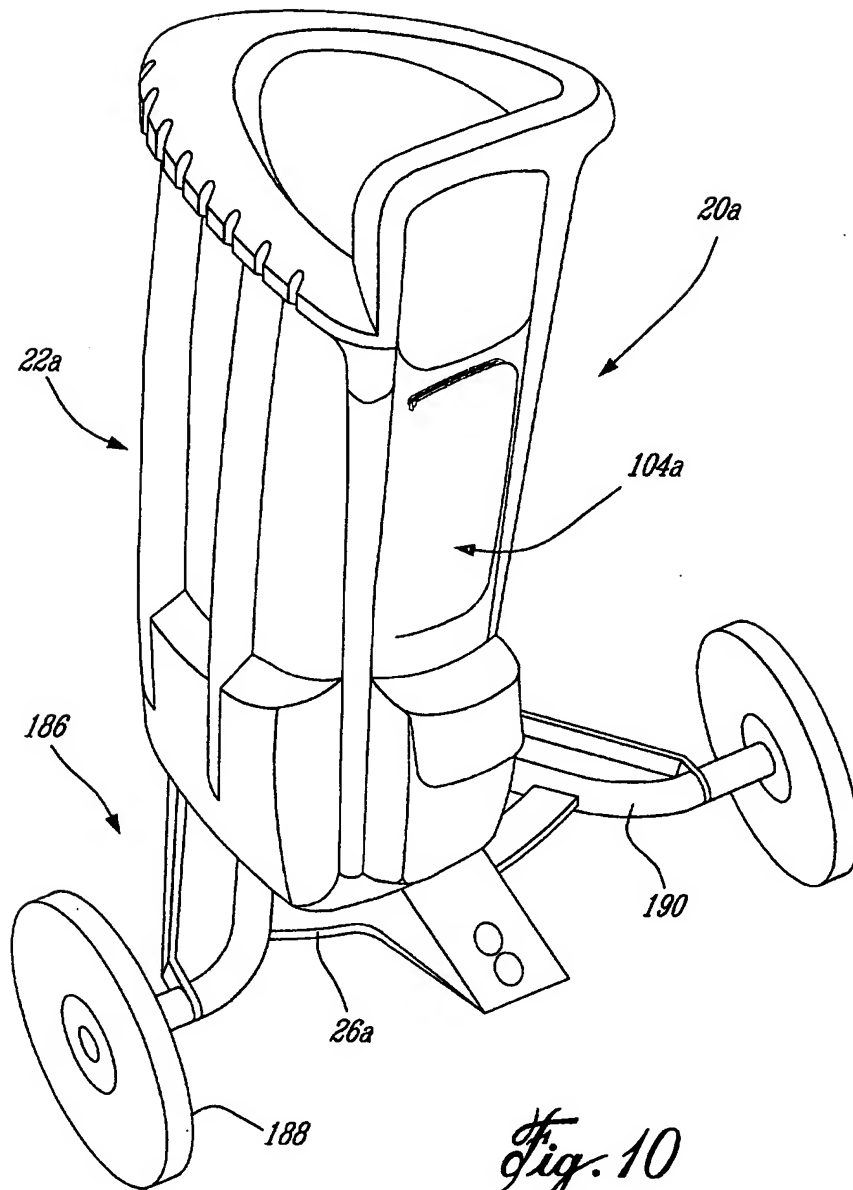


Fig. 10